

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-17 have been withdrawn. Claims 18, 24, and 36 have been cancelled. The Examiner did indicate that Claims 19, 21 and 30 would be allowable if amended to be in independent form and to include the subject matter of claim 18. Thus, claims 19-23, 25-35 and 37-41 are now in condition for allowance.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner considers the subject matter of claim 19-23 and 25-41 as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Although not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, claims 19, 21 and 30 have been amended to be in independent form and to include the subject matter of claim 18. Thus, claims 19-23, 25-35 and 37-41 are now in condition for allowance.

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has recognized the Applicant's claim for foreign priority. In view of the fact that the Applicant's claim for foreign priority has been perfected, no additional action is required from the Applicants at this time.

DRAWINGS

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has approved the Formal Drawings submitted by the Applicants. The drawings comply with the requirements of the USPTO. No

further action is necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The Examiner has acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on November 24, 2003. An initialed copy of the PTO-1449 has been received from the Examiner. No further action is necessary at this time.

RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT

The Examiner has continued with his restriction requirement. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his restriction requirement and proceed to allow all of the claims of the present application. However, in order to be responsive to the Examiner's requirements, claims 1-17 have been withdrawn. Applicants have reserved the right to file a divisional application directed to the non-elected claims at a later date

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

As requested by the Examiner, the title of the invention has been corrected. The title is now believed to be in proper form.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC 102

Claims 18 and 24 stand rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by Kuzma US 5,781,901. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Although not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to

advance the prosecution of the present application, claims 18, 24 and 36 have been cancelled. The Examiner's rejection based on 35 USC 102 has been obviated.

NO PROSECUTION HISTORY ESTOPPEL

Claims 19, 21 and 30 are hereby presented in independent form. No prosecution history estoppel would apply to the interpretation of the limitations set forth in claims 19, 21 and 30 and the claims that depend therefrom in view of the fact that this subject matter has been continuously presented since the original filing date of the present application.

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

If the Examiner has any questions with regard to this application, he/she is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned so that an interview can be arranged in connection with this application.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish over the patents relied on by the Examiner, either alone or in combination.

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but to merely show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims are respectfully requested.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

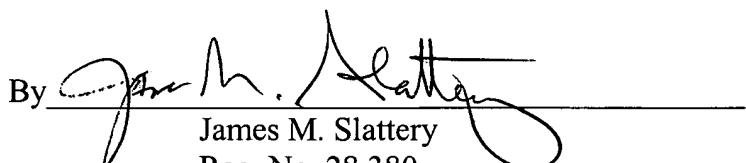
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

A prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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